

# **ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON VERMONT'S REACH UP PROGRAM**



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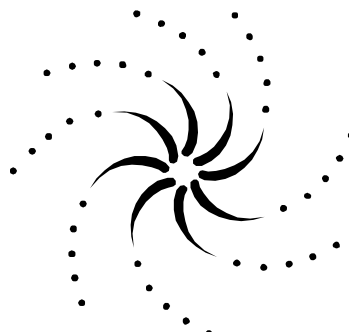
**January 31, 2003**

# Highlights

- In May 2000, the General Assembly enacted Act 147, An Act Relating to Assisting Families to Attain Self-Sufficiency. This legislation set the stage for Vermont's entry into a new era of aiding families with children and the transition to federal welfare reform regulations under TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families).
- Reach Up is the name of Vermont's welfare program. All Reach Up participants work with a case manager and most are required to participate in activities leading to employment.
- Over the last year and a half, more than 5,000 families were assessed by Reach Up case managers and transitioned into the new Reach Up program.
- In July 2002, the federal Department of Health and Human Services awarded Vermont a \$2.4 million high performance bonus for its success in placing Reach Up parents in jobs.
- The number of Vermonters (14,550) receiving Reach Up or Postsecondary Education (PSE) benefits remains at an historic 25-year low; this milestone is even more impressive when looked at in the context of the increased population of Vermont over the same period.
- We continued to accept new students into the PSE program in the September 2002 and January 2003 semesters to pursue two- or four-year college degrees for a total of 360 participating parent.
- An expanded partnership with the Department of Aging and Disabilities' (DAD) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) helped 500 parents who are physically or mentally challenged. 109 parents have been placed in jobs, and VR helped 62 others get disability benefits.
- PATH received positive responses to its RFP for workforce development. Trainers in partnership with employers are expanding opportunities for Reach Up participants in the fields of nursing, medical clerical, painting, and landscaping.
- A new on-demand transportation project operated by the Good News Garage provides flexibility and availability to meet transportation needs. This project will expand from 4 to 7 districts in the coming year.
- Vermont has met all of its federal work participation rate requirements, successfully moving families toward self-sufficiency and preserving our federal funds.
- Vermont's 7-year Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP) ended June 30, 2001. The final evaluation report was published in September 2002 and is available upon request.

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## **PATH's MISSION**

Our mission is to help Vermonters find a path to a better life. To this end, we take on many roles: employment coach, health insurance provider, crisis manager, career planner, champion of families and promoter of human potential. Most importantly, we are Vermonters helping Vermonters.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Federal Welfare Reform**

On August 22, 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, known as the federal welfare reform bill or PRWORA, was signed. Title I of PRWORA created the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to replace the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and JOBS programs (which were known as ANFC and Reach Up, respectively, in Vermont). In addition, TANF is funded through a block grant in contrast to the open-ended federal financial participation system of the past. TANF-funded assistance to families is limited to 60 months in a lifetime unless the family is exempt under the hardship exception that applies to up to 20 percent of the caseload. This provision does not preclude use of state funds to assist families that are not eligible for federal TANF assistance.

PRWORA gave states the opportunity to continue operation of welfare reform demonstration projects. Vermont continued its Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP) through completion on June 30, 2001, while making plans to transition from WRP to TANF by July 1, 2001.

TANF was due for federal reauthorization by September 30, 2002. While the Administration detailed its proposal and several other bills were introduced, to date Congress has not passed legislation, other than a continuing resolution to fund the program through March 31, 2003.

Based on proposed legislation, Vermont's Reach Up program will face significant challenges, particularly in the arena of work participation rates and the time and structure allowed for families to engage in activities that address barriers to work. As final legislation is developed, the department will analyze its impact on the Reach Up program and identify where state legislation and regulation changes will be needed.

### **State Welfare Reform**

Since July 1, 2001, Vermont has been subject to all federal TANF requirements. In preparation for this transition from the Welfare Restructuring Project (WRP), Act 147 (2000), An Act Relating to Assisting Families to Attain Self-Sufficiency, renamed the "Aid to Needy Families with Children" program "Reach Up", built on the premises of WRP, and made some fundamental changes to the program effective July 1, 2001.

PATH promulgated rules effective November 1, 2000, to establish a period of transition from ANFC/WRP to the new Reach Up program. This transition continued through May 2002.

PATH also promulgated rules to create the Postsecondary Education (PSE) Program for Low-Income Parents, a separate state-funded program for parents pursuing a two- or four-year degree.

**Key elements of Act 147 include:**

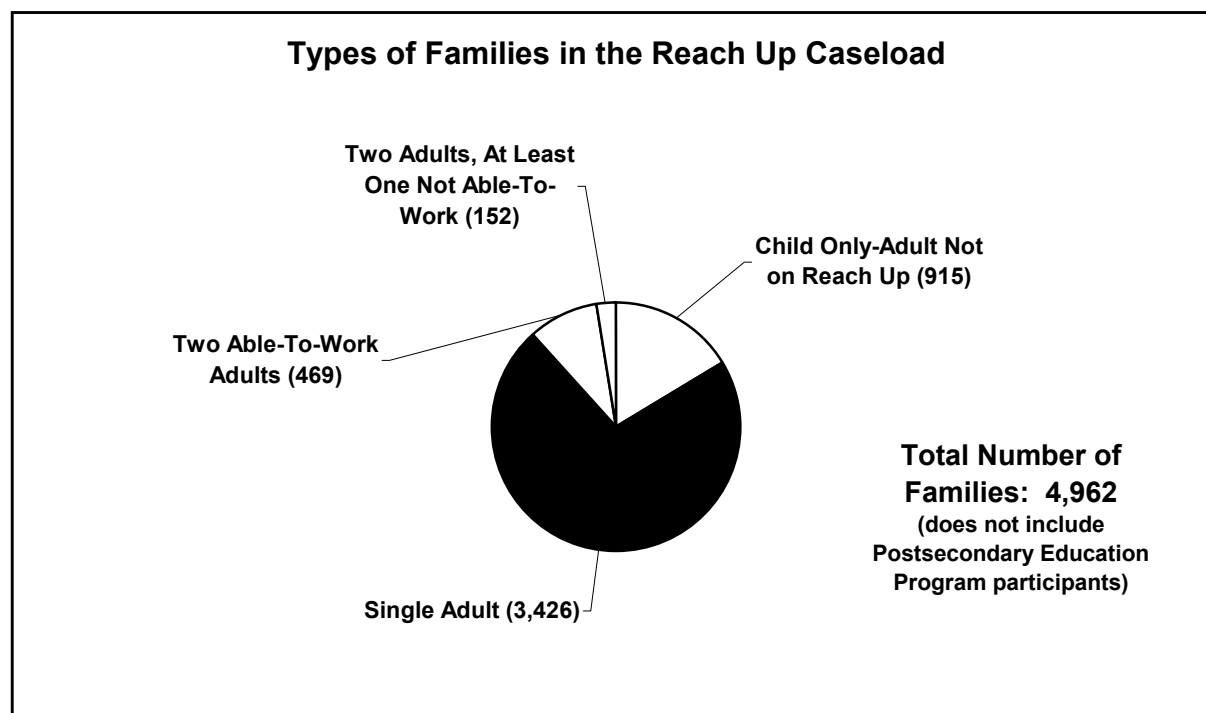
- ANFC and Reach Up became one program, called “Reach Up”. Reach Up has a financial assistance component and a services/family development/self-sufficiency component.
- As soon as a parent or caretaker is granted Reach Up financial assistance, he or she will be assigned a case manager and will be required to participate in activities leading to employment.
- An assessment of each family’s strengths, skills, experience, and challenges will occur during the first 30 days of assistance, culminating in the creation of a Family Development Plan (FDP). The assessment will include a literacy evaluation.
- Most parents and caretakers will have a work requirement as soon as they are work ready, or at the end of 12 cumulative months of receiving Reach Up financial assistance, whichever is earlier. The number of hours varies by the household’s situation. Extensions and deferrals may be granted.
- The work requirement may be met by participation in subsidized or unsubsidized employment, community work experience, vocational training, or other activities as specified in federal law and Vermont Reach Up regulations.
- In recognition of the importance of reliable transportation, Act 147 allows two-parent families to have two vehicles excluded as a resource.
- Failure to participate in FDP or work activities without good cause will result in a fiscal sanction; beginning at \$75 per month with graduated increases. Housing protection is provided for six months.
- “Separate state programs” will be created for adults in postsecondary education, parents who are not participating in work activities for the required number of hours when necessary to meet federal work participation rate requirements, and single parents with a child under the age of two (subject to a 24-month lifetime limit). This provision enhances the state’s ability to preserve longstanding Vermont policies and to meet the federal work participation rates and preserve federal funding.
- PATH will be required to complete various evaluations and annual reports to the legislature, as well as comply with TANF federal reporting requirements.

This report is submitted pursuant to Section 1134 of Act 147, Program Evaluation, subsection (a) and the sections correspond to the numerical paragraphs under subsection (a).

Readers may want to refer to page 18 for additional information about the acronyms and terms used in this report.

**SECTION 1**  
**TYPES OF BARRIERS FACING REACH UP FAMILIES SEEKING ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY, THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES WITH EACH TYPE OF BARRIER, AND THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF EACH TYPE OF BARRIER.**

To give context to the information in this report, the first two charts present a picture of the types of families that participate in the Reach Up program and the number of adults in these families. These are average monthly figures for the period December 2001 through November 2002.



**Average Number of Adults Participating in Reach Up Program**

Family Type		Average Number of Adults Participating in Reach Up Each Month (does not include Postsecondary Education Program participants)
	Child Only (child's parent or caretaker is not on Reach Up)	0
	Single Adult	3,426
	Two Able-To-Work Adults	938
	Two Adults, at least One Not Able-to-Work	304
	<b>Total Adults</b>	<b>4,468</b>

## Number of Reach Up Participants With Identified Barriers – Total for the Period December 2001 through November 2002

A brief description of some of the factors contributing to each barrier is included.

<b>Types of Barriers</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>	<b>% of Participants Assessed that have each type of barrier</b>
<b>Transportation</b> – no safe/reliable car, no license, can't afford insurance	2227	39%
<b>Adult employment</b> – minimum skills, poor work history, not matched with labor market	1737	31%
<b>Education</b> – lacks essential skills, limited literacy, doesn't set education goals	1635	29%
<b>Finances</b> – can't meet basic needs, bills in arrears, no knowledge of available help	1548	27%
<b>Health and safety</b> – condition that limits employment choices, poorly nourished, untreated or poorly treated health problems, danger to self or others	1203	21%
<b>Shelter</b> – temporary, transitional or unsafe housing, being evicted, poor rental history/references	1004	18%
<b>Working skills and habits</b> – inappropriate clothing/hygiene, misses appointments or deadlines, doesn't meet expectations	1007	18%
<b>Social/emotional health</b> – unable to cope with pressure, substance abuse, mental/emotional disturbances	984	17%
<b>Legal issues</b> – court issues pending, criminal record, family member incarcerated	979	17%
<b>Family interactions</b> – isolated, conflicts, subject to emotional or physical harm	512	9%
<b>Child development</b> – child has serious delays, high absenteeism, needs significant adult intervention, no childcare available	845	15%
<b>Food and clothing</b> – lack of resources for nutritious food and adequate clothing	450	8%
<b>Community relations</b> – negative relationship with neighbors, community	340	6%
<b>Total Number of Participants Assessed*</b>	<b>5643</b>	
<b>Average Number of Barriers/Participant</b>	<b>3.0</b>	

*\*584 participants were assessed twice during this 12-month period. Since both of the assessments for these individuals are reflected here, the actual number of people receiving assessments was 5059.*

Transportation is the most common barrier for families. In response to this the department has begun two initiatives. The first is an on-demand transportation project operated by the Good News Garage. This service is available to Reach Up participants without transportation who are working, or attending training, education programs, or job interviews. It provides the flexibility and availability not previously found through any other source, but necessary to help people work. Currently the service is available in four PATH districts with plans to expand to three additional districts by July 2003.

PATH has also begun a pilot program in Chittenden County to help adults pay outstanding traffic fines and get their licenses reinstated. This effort, a collaboration among PATH, the United Way, faith-based organizations, Vermont Adult Learning, the Department of Corrections, and the Vermont Development Credit Union is in the start-up phase but shows promise of addressing this significant barrier.

See Section 2 of this report for details about some of the initiatives to address employment and education barriers.

A deferment is a temporary postponement of the full work requirement. A deferred participant must have an FDP with an employment goal and be participating in activities leading to the goal to the extent that he or she is able. Activities should include some work activities if the person is able to participate.

#### Families With Deferments

Type of Deferment*	Average Number of Families, by Type				
	Single Adult	Two Able-to-Work Adults	Two Adults, at Least One Not Able-to-Work	Child Only (Adult Not on RU)	Total
Awaiting medical decision	171	72	18	0	261
Medical condition < 90 days	87	2	12	0	101
Medical: Voc Rehab referral	368	3	51	0	422
Medical: SSI or Medical Review Team referral	3	0	0	0	3
Able to work part-time with medical condition	3	0	0	0	3
Child < 13 weeks	17	1	0	0	18
Child < 6 months	74	0	0	0	74
Child < 2 years but > 6 months	145	0	0	0	145
Needed in home	25	1	1	0	27
Child care not available	6	0	0	0	6
Transportation not available	8	0	0	0	8
In education (limited options)	7	0	0	0	7
Domestic violence barriers	6	0	0	0	6
No deferment	2500	390	70	915	3875
<b>Total</b>	<b>3426</b>	<b>469</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>4962</b>

\*Figures represent the deferment status of the primary earning adult.



**SECTION 2**  
**DOCUMENTATION OF PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES, INCLUDING SPECIFIC**  
**INFORMATION RELATING TO:**

- **THE NUMBER OF PERSONS EMPLOYED, BY OCCUPATION, INDUSTRY AND WAGE; THE TYPES OF SUBSIDIZED AND UNSUBSIDIZED JOBS SECURED BY PARTICIPANTS;**
- **ANY AVAILABLE INFORMATION ABOUT OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE REACH UP PROGRAM, INCLUDING OBJECTIVE INDICATORS OF IMPROVED CONDITIONS; AND**
- **THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING FAMILIES INVOLVED IN TRAINING PROGRAMS.**

Vermont became subject to the two federal work participation rates beginning July 1, 2001 and has met its requirement for federal fiscal year (FFY) 2001 (ending September 30, 2001). The following chart illustrates Vermont's work participation rates for FFY02. Figures represent data for October 2001 through June 2002 (the latest figures available). To meet their work participation requirement, parents were involved in a variety of activities depending on their work readiness. These activities include employment, work experience, on-the-job training, job search, vocational education, job skills training, and school attendance.

**Federal Work Participation Rates (FFY02)**

	<b>All Families</b>	<b>2-Parent Families</b>
Average Work Participation Rate	20.8%	32.7%
Average Number of Families Satisfying Federal Work Requirement Through Work Activities	787	152

Required rates for FFY02 are 9.2% for All Families and 29.3% for 2-Parent Families. These requirements take into account the credit for caseload reduction Vermont has experienced since 1994.

Information presented in the rest of this section represents a monthly average based on data from December 2001 through November 2002. It does not include the Postsecondary Education program.

**Parents Participate in Training and Education Programs**

<b>Activity Type</b>	<b>Average # of Participants</b>
Work Experience	173
On-the-Job Training	27
Vocational Education	51
Job Skills Training	282
Satisfactory School Attendance	305

As shown in the table on the previous page, the average number of participants in training activities (work experience, on-the-job training, vocational education, job skills training and school attendance) was 838. In addition, the separate postsecondary education program provided the opportunity to 360 participants each school semester to pursue educational opportunities to enhance their employability.

Parents are supported in short-term placements. Work, Training and Education placements are for those who are pre-work-ready and others who are work ready but not meeting their work requirement and need to improve their employability. Community Service placements are for individuals unable to meet their work requirement because work is not available due to local economic conditions. Over the past year placements have been with municipalities, schools, community action agencies, senior meals sites, local housing authorities, parent-child centers, UVM, YMCA and Salvation Army. Duties included office work, maintenance, cleaning and other services.

PATH continues to expand its efforts to provide job skills and vocational education to Reach Up participants. An approach that allows for regional differences in job market, training opportunities, and participant interests led PATH to invest in four types of initiatives:

- ◆ Each of PATH's twelve district offices are provided a pool of training dollars that can be used to support job skills and vocational training. These dollars are used in combination with other funds to pay tuition for individuals. Examples of courses taken include pharmacy technician and commercial driver's license.
- ◆ PATH partnered with the Work Education and Training Fund (WETF) program operated by the Department of Employment and Training (DET). PATH agreed to reimburse the WETF program for every successful participant who completed a WETF funded training and further agreed to provide additional funding, up to \$10,000, to support outreach, orientation, and ongoing support to Reach Up participants. Examples of training funded through this partnership include a medical office assistant training program and an automotive welding program.
- ◆ PATH issued its own Request for Proposals for workforce development proposals. Like the WETF fund, this RFP required that proposers include commitments to hire from employer partners in the training. Examples of training funded include licensed nurses aid and personal care attendant training programs, medical clerical program, commercial drivers license program, interior and exterior painting, and landscaping and groundskeeping. This RFP remains open.
- ◆ PATH is working in collaboration with DET, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Adult Service Coordinators to pilot projects that would replicate successful training programs in areas where there is an identified labor market need. The first series of pilots will support the replication of the Clean Sweep program - a very successful custodial training program.

In addition to these efforts, PATH continues to work with appropriate small and micro-business technical assistance providers to insure that Reach Up participants interested in self-employment have access to services.

### **Families Combine Welfare with Work**

On average, 1306 participants combined welfare with work each month. The charts below illustrate the types of occupations in which Reach Up participants worked, the industries these jobs were in and the hourly wages Reach Up participants are earning.

#### **Reach Up Participants Employed by Occupation**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Percentage in Each Occupation</b>	<b>Average Number In Each Occupation</b>
Sales	20%	260
Professional, Technical, Managerial	16%	210
Food Service	13%	163
Health Services (Nurses, etc.)	8%	104
Clerical	6%	73
Education (Teachers, etc.)	4%	57
Lodging Service	4%	48
Personal Service	4%	47
Domestic Services (private homes)	3%	40
Recreation	3%	36
Building Service	2%	23
Machine Work	2%	22
Transportation	1%	18
Structural Work	1%	14
Other	<1% each	53
Unknown	10.5%	137
<b>Total Participants Employed</b>		<b>1306</b>

#### **Reach Up Participants Employed by Industry**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Percentage in Each Industry</b>	<b>Average Number of Participants</b>
Services	48%	623
Retail Trade	12%	161
Transportation & Public Utilities	8%	102
Manufacturing	2%	30
Government	2%	30
Construction	2%	27
Agric/Forestry/Fishing/Mining	2%	22
Finance/Insurance/Real Estate	1%	10
Wholesale Trade	1%	9
Other or Unknown	22%	292
<b>Total Participants Employed</b>		<b>1306</b>

### Reach Up Participants' Wages

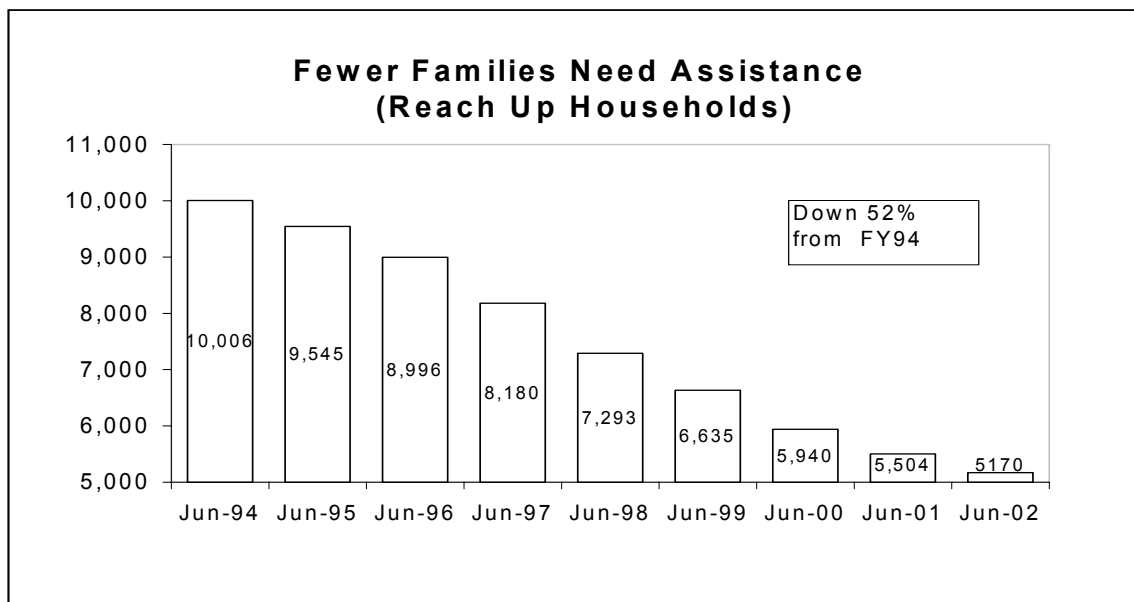
Wage	Percentage in Wage Range	Average Number of Participants
Under \$7.00 per hour	23%	299
\$7.00 - \$7.99 per hour	23%	302
\$8.00 - \$8.99 per hour	15%	198
\$9.00 - \$9.99 per hour	6%	72
\$10.00 - \$10.99 per hour	5%	66
\$11.00 - \$11.99 per hour	1%	16
\$12.00 per hour and over	3%	42
Unknown	24%	308
<b>Total Participants Employed</b>		<b>1303</b>

### Families Move from Welfare to Work

An indicator of a family's move toward self-sufficiency and better outcomes for their children is the number of families who have left the Reach Up program as a result of increased income. Between December 1, 2001 and November 30, 2002, 2887 families have ended their reliance on Reach Up for this reason. Of note is 1150 families had benefits end because of increased child support collections, placing the family in a better financial situation than Reach Up benefits could.

### Fewer Families Need Assistance

The following chart illustrates families' success in moving from welfare. The timeframe looks back to the implementation of Vermont's first welfare reform initiative in July 1994 and continues through the current reforms.



### **Age of Children Participating in Reach Up Program**

<b>Age</b>	<b>Average # of Children</b>	<b>As % of All Children</b>
0 to 1	799	9%
1+ to 2	693	8%
2+ to 3	595	7%
3+ to 6	1664	19%
6+ to 10	1838	21%
10+ to 16	2329	27%
16+ to 18	595	7%
> 18	170	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8683</b>	

### **A Key to Child Outcomes is Child Development**

As discussed in Section 3 below, case managers provide comprehensive case management services to all families receiving Reach Up benefits. The case manager uses a Family Support Matrix to assess 13 areas of family life. One of these areas is the development of a family's child(ren). This includes issues related to development, school attendance, behavior, independence and availability of childcare. Our findings (see Identified Barriers chart on page 7) are that children are doing well - 85 percent of the families do not indicate issues in this area.

## **SECTION 3**

### **A DESCRIPTION OF THE CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM AND THE TRAINING OF CASE MANAGERS**

### **Overview of the PATH's Case Management System**

PATH provides comprehensive case management services to all families receiving Reach Up financial assistance. PATH's case management system provides adults and mandatory youth with a primary case manager located in one of five types of organizations, and includes services provided by community-based organizations as needed and appropriate. Case management begins as soon as a family applies for financial assistance and continues until the family is no longer eligible for case management services. Case management can continue for up to a year after a Reach Up parent terminates benefits because of employment.

Case managers supported by PATH have three primary functions:

- ✓ **Complete in-depth assessments**

Case managers gather information about each family member. Case managers use a Family Support Matrix to assess 13 areas of family life:

- Basic Needs: shelter, food and clothing, transportation, and finances
- Family and Individual Health and Resiliency: health and safety, child development and education, social and emotional health including substance abuse, family interactions, legal, and community relations
- Employability: adult education, adult employment, and work skills and habits

Case managers, in consultation with family members and other resources, as appropriate, determine whether or not the areas listed above **support** the family's efforts to achieve economic self-sufficiency, **interfere** with these efforts, or have **no impact**.

See chart in Section 1 for additional information about barriers and deferments.

#### ✓ **Negotiate a Family Development Plan**

Based on initial and ongoing assessment results, case managers work with the adults in a family to identify realistic employment goals. Once employment goals are set, case managers work with these families to identify activities and services that would support the adults' efforts to achieve their goals. The Family Development Plan (FDP) details the activities a family will complete and the support services the family will need to participate in agreed upon activities. The FDP functions as a working contract between the Department and the family.

#### ✓ **Provide ongoing support and assistance**

Once the assessment and FDP are completed, case managers have at least monthly contact with families to discuss progress on the activities detailed on the FDP. As needed, case managers work with families to change or modify plans, identify additional resources or activities, and initiate or support problem-solving efforts.

To better meet the diverse needs of PATH participants, the Department provides case management services through twelve district PATH, Employment and Training (DET) and Vocational Rehabilitation offices, fifteen parent Child Centers (PCCs) and within the college setting for participants enrolled in the Postsecondary Education (PSE) program.

In general, PATH case managers provide services to single parents, DET case managers provide services to two-parent households when both parents are able-to-work, Vocational Rehabilitation to participants found to have a disability, Parent Child Centers to minor and young parents, and PSE case managers provide services to participants enrolled or preparing to enroll in two- or four-year degree programs.

## **Background and Training of Case Managers**

Entry-level requirements for case managers vary from organization to organization. PATH requires that in-house case managers have at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent in an appropriate field of study and experience providing case management services before they begin providing these services. External contractors set their own entry-level standards and PATH relies on their hiring practices to insure that case managers have the requisite skills.

Post-employment training for case managers include:

- Overview of PATH programs, services, and benefits
- Basic and Advanced Interviewing
- Reach Up Services Training
- Domestic Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Reach Up ACCESS computer system
- Update training on programs, regulations and implementation practices

This year all case management staff received training in Communication Skills and De-escalation. DET also provided training in labor market research and setting employment goals to case managers in every PATH district. Most case managers also attended a VR-offered training session on working with people with disabilities.

PATH has issued an RFP for Case Management Training to be presented during SFY'03. The training will cover the following areas identified by staff and management:

- Strength-based assessment
- Identifying, developing, and utilizing community resources
- How to work in consultation or collaboration with community resources
- Group facilitation
- Effective caseload management practices

In addition to training, the work of case managers is supported in four ways:

- ☐ Supervisory Case Reviews: Supervisors regularly review case files and they use the results of these reviews to work individually with case managers to improve casework practices.
- ☐ Mentors: New case managers are often paired with experienced case managers.
- ☐ Program Performance Audits: Random audits of files are conducted as part of a quality assurance and continuous improvement effort in case documentation and casework practice. Findings are used to determine areas that may require additional training or coaching.
- ☐ Case Manager Meetings: It is common practice for districts to maintain a regular schedule of meetings among case managers. Agendas for the meetings may vary, but typically the groups would discuss resources and issues of local concern, may brainstorm around particularly difficult situations, and when appropriate meet in smaller teams to coordinate work with families they serve in common.

**SECTION 4  
DATA ABOUT THE FOOD STAMP PARTICIPATION OF HOUSEHOLDS  
WHO HAVE LEFT REACH UP DURING THE LAST FISCAL YEAR**

**SECTION 5  
DATA ABOUT THE ENROLLMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LEFT REACH UP  
DURING THE LAST FISCAL YEAR IN A HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

To put the following chart in context, a point of reference may be helpful. In November 2002, of the 4,928 households (12,850 individuals) who participated in the Reach Up program, 4,266 (87%) also received food stamp benefits. This means that approximately 13% did not participate in the program while receiving Reach Up benefits and having the opportunity to apply for food stamp benefits on the combined application form.

The following chart is modeled after the chart designed by the federal government for states to provide information about continuance of medical assistance to compete for a TANF High Performance Bonus. The milepost for this data is 4-months after Reach Up benefits end. It has been adapted to report similar data about food stamp participation of families whose Reach Up assistance has ended. When Reach Up benefits end, the family's case manager determines whether the family remains eligible for food stamp benefits.

**Reach Up Leavers' Participation in Food Stamps – Fiscal Year 2002**

	Quarter end Sep'01	Quarter end Dec'01	Quarter end Mar'02	Quarter end June'02
1. Total number of individuals who left Reach Up	4586	3803	3413	4008
2. Those in #1 who were <u>not</u> receiving RU in the 4 <sup>th</sup> month after leaving RU	4086 (89%)	3221 (85%)	2737 (80%)	3190 (80%)
3. Those in #2 who were enrolled in food stamps at the time of leaving RU	3337 (82%)	2670 (83%)	2374 (87%)	2702 (85%)
4. Those in #3 who were also enrolled in food stamps in the 4 <sup>th</sup> month after leaving RU	1340 (40%)	1318 (49%)	1112 (48%)	1231 (46%)

Our state is a leader in providing health care assistance to children and families. While a family of three loses eligibility for Reach Up when their income reaches approximately \$12,000 a year, the adults will be eligible for transitional Medicaid until their annual income reaches \$28,240 and their children remain eligible for Dr. Dynasaur until the family's income tops \$45,800 (even higher income if the family pays for child care). In November 2002, 97,124 children and adults were covered by Medicaid or Dr. Dynasaur.



As with food stamps, the family's case manager is required to determine the family's continuing eligibility for Medicaid/Dr. Dynasaur when Reach Up benefits end.

### Reach Up Leavers' Participation in Medicaid and Dr. Dynasaur – Fiscal Year 2002

	Quarter end Sep'01	Quarter end Dec'01	Quarter end Mar'02	Quarter end June'02
1. Total number of individuals who left Reach Up	4586	3803	3413	4008
2. Those in #1 who were <u>not</u> receiving RU in the 4 <sup>th</sup> month after leaving RU	4086 (89%)	3221 (85%)	2737 (80%)	3190 (80%)
3. Those in #2 who were enrolled in a medical assistance program at the time of leaving RU	3975 (97%)	3113 (97%)	2651 (97%)	3133 (98%)
4. Those in #3 who were also enrolled in a medical assistance program in the 4 <sup>th</sup> month after leaving RU	3225 (81%)	2460 (79%)	2057 (78%)	2461 (79%)

## SECTION 6 SUMMARY OF ALL INTERIM AND FINAL REPORTS SUBMITTED BY INDEPENDENT EVALUATION CONTRACTORS TO THE AGENCY OR THE DEPARTMENT RELATING TO THE REACH UP PROGRAM

During this legislative session, the department will recommend postponing the independent three-year evaluation of the Reach Up program and the related interim annual reports on the progress of the evaluation for the following reasons:

- ❑ The cost of contracting for this evaluation is not the most prudent expenditure during this time of fiscal constraint. The funds saved could be used to offset budget cuts and preserve needed services.
- ❑ The evaluation may not be able to accomplish the intended outcome because anticipated changes in federal law under TANF reauthorization may require Vermont to modify the Reach Up program during the evaluation period. An underlying premise of a formal evaluation is that the program being evaluated remains substantially the same throughout the evaluation period. This may not be possible.

# Acronyms and Terms

**ABLE-TO-WORK** Free of any physical, emotional or mental condition that would prevent the individual from engaging in any combination of the work activities for at least 35 hours/week.

**ANFC Aid to Needy Families with Children.** The name of Vermont's welfare program through 6/30/01. (See Reach Up)

**BARRIER** Any physical, emotional or mental condition; lack of educational, vocational or other skill ability; lack of transportation, child care, housing, medical assistance or other services or resources; domestic violence circumstances; caretaker responsibilities or other conditions or circumstances that prevent an individual from engaging in employment or other work activity.

**BLOCK GRANT** A federal funding mechanism that sets a maximum funding level. The TANF block grant for Vermont is \$47.4 million per year. Prior to PRWORA, welfare was funded as an entitlement program.

**FAMILY BONUS** Up to \$50.00 per month is given to Reach Up families and not counted in their grant – based on whether child support was paid to OCS by a noncustodial parent two months prior. Formerly known as DEFRA, disregard or passalong. (See also Parent Share)

**FAMILY SUPPORT MATRIX** Primary assessment tool in determining a participant's work status. It forms the foundation for the family's FDP.

**FDP Family Development Plan.** An individualized written plan developed by the case manager with involvement of the family that charts the family's participation in the services component of Reach Up. The plan identifies an employment goal and describes the goals, tasks, services and timeframes for completion of the FDP.

**MOE Maintenance of Effort.** A provision of the TANF block grant that requires states to continue to spend state funds on assistance for families. Vermont's annual requirement is \$27.4 million (\$25.7 million if TANF work requirement rates are met).

**OCS Office of Child Support.** The state office responsible for administration of child support activities including paternity establishment and support collection.

**PARENT SHARE** A portion of the Reach Up financial assistance benefit that is based on current child support from two months prior (if any). It is sent to the family by PATH. This was formerly referred to as child support and was formerly sent to the family by OCS.

**PATH The Department of Prevention, Assistance, Transition, and Health Access.** Formerly known as the Department of Social Welfare (DSW). The state department responsible for the administration of Reach Up financial assistance and case management, and the health insurance, food stamps, fuel assistance, general assistance, and essential person programs.

**PARTICIPATION PHASES** Adults move toward work and independence from Reach Up financial assistance by progressing through the phases of the Reach Up service component. The four phases are: application phase, pre-work-ready phase, work-ready phase and employment phase. Participation in each of the second and third phases is limited to 12 cumulative months for each adult during a lifetime. Not all adults will spend 12 months in each of these phases (many, only a short time) and some will skip the work-ready phase and move right to the employment phase.

**PRWORA Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act.** Federal legislation passed in August 1996, commonly called welfare reform, that among other things created TANF. The authorizing legislation for TANF expired 9/30/02. A current continuing resolution funds the program through March 31, 2003.

**PSE Postsecondary Education.** A separate state program that enables low-income Vermont parents to receive financial assistance stipends, case management, and support services while pursuing two- or four-year postsecondary education degrees.

**REACH UP (RU)** As of July 1, 2001, Vermont's welfare (TANF) program that has a financial assistance component and a services component. PATH staff determine a family's eligibility for Reach Up.

**TANF Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.** The federal welfare program name and block grant funding source enacted under PRWORA in August 1996.

**TIME LIMIT** The federal limit of 5 cumulative years of TANF-funded benefits to a family. There is a 20% hardship exemption. A state may use state funds to continue to support a family not eligible for TANF. Currently, Vermont does not have an "end of benefits" policy.

**VR (VOC REHAB) Vocational Rehabilitation.** A division of the state Department of Aging and Disabilities (DAD) that partners with PATH to work with Reach Up participants.

**WORK ACTIVITIES** The activities that participants must engage in to fulfill their work requirement. An approved activity is one approved by the case manager as an FDP requirement. A countable activity is one that can be counted toward the hours of a participant's work requirement. Countable work activities include: unsubsidized employment; job search; subsidized employment; work, training and education placement; community service placement; work experience; vocational education; job skills training; basic education directly related to employment; and self-employment. Activities may be restricted in time or scope.

**WORK REQUIREMENTS** The requirement to participate in work activities. The participant must work or engage in countable work activities for 20, 30 or 40 hours, depending on the family composition.

**WRP Welfare Restructuring Project.** Vermont's 7-year welfare reform that began July 1, 1994, and ended June 30, 2001. When WRP ended, Vermont became subject to all federal TANF requirements.

